

Message Text

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ACTION HA-05

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INFO AMEMBASSY MANILA
AMEMBASSY SEOUL
AMCONSUL UDORN

UNCLAS SECTION 1 OF 2 BANGKOK 9721

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: SHUM, TH
SUBJ: PROPOSED LEGISLATION TO AUTHORIZE USG ASSISTANCE TO AMERSIAN
CHILDREN IN THAILAND

REF: STATE 77139 NOTAL

1. SUMMARY: EMBASSY'S CONTACTS IN THE WELFARE FIELD BELIEVE
THAT THE AMERASIAN CHILDREN WHO NUMBER AT LEAST 3,500 COUNTRY-
WIDE ARE NOT SOCIALLY DISCRIMINATED AGAINST BUT AS THE LOWEST
RANKS IN THE ECONOMIC ORDER DO NEED EDUCATIONAL, MEDICAL AND
FAMILY ASSISTANCE. OUR CONTACTS INDICATE SOME RESERVATIONS
WHICH WE SHARE ABOUT S.2555. THE RTG HAS SURVEYED THE SITUATION
AND HAS SPECIFIC REMEDIES AND PROPOSALS TO MAKE. END SUMMARY.

2. THE RTG, IN A SURVEY OF AMERASIAN CHILDREN IN EARLY 1976,
FOUND A TOTAL OF 3,562 CHILDREN LOCATED IN EIGHT PROVINCES
AND BANGKOK METROPOLIS MOSTLY IN LOCATIONS AROUND FORMER SIGNIFICANT
U.S. MILITARY INSTALLATIONS. OF THESE, 2,319 CHILDREN WERE
FOUND TO BE LIVING WITH THEIR MOTHERS; 773 LIVING WITH
PERMANENT FOSTER FAMILIES; 377 LIVING WITH RELATIVES AND 93
WITH PAID GUARDIANS. THE CHILDREN HAD THE FOLLOWING AGE
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SPREAD IN EARLY 1976:
AGE 0-5 2,373(66.6 PERCENT)
6-7 708(19.9 PERCENT)
8-15 477(13.3 PERCENT)
15 AND ABOVE 4 (.1 PERCENT)

3. THE MOTHERS QUESTIONED INDICATED THE FOLLOWING

ECONOMIC BACKGROUND:

36.1 PERCENT BAR GIRLS-PROSTITUTES
33.1 PERCENT NO OCCUPATION
14.3 PERCENT UNSKILLED LABOR
9.2 PERCENT SMALL TRADER
4.3 PERCENT SUPPORTED BY HUSBAND
3.0 PERCENT FARMERS

4. WHEN QUESTIONED, THE SOME 3,000 PLUS PARENTS AND GUARDIANS HAD THE FOLLOWING VIEWS ON NECESSARY ASSISTANCE: 1,350 GUARDIANS (37.9PERCENT) DESIRED GOVERNMENT ASSISTANCE IN EDUCATION; 762 (21.4 PERCENT) DESIRED GOVERNMENT ASSISTANCE FOR FAMILY MAINTENANCE; 456 (12.8 PERCENT) WISHED TO RELEASE THE CHILDREN TO THE WELFARE DEPARTMENT FOR CARE; 678 (19 PERCENT) REQUIRED NO ASSISTANCE; 24 (0.7 PERCENT) REQUIRED ASSISTANCE FOR MEDICAL CARE, PURCHASING MILK, OR TO ASSIST IN STARTING BUSINESSES.

5. THE WELFARE DEPARTMENT HAS, IN DRAFT, A COMPREHENSIVE ASSISTANCE PLAN TAKING INTO CONSIDERATION THAT ONLY 4.3 PERCENT OR 119 CHILDREN RECEIVED ASSISTANCE FROM BIOLOGICAL FATHERS AND THAT 66.6 PERCENT WERE UNDER THE AGE OF 5 (IN 1976). THE GREATEST NEED APPEARS TO BE ASSISTANCE TO THE PARENT OR GUARDIAN IN PURCHASING FOOD, MEDICAL ASSISTANCE AND CLOTHES FOR PRESCHOOLERS AND SOME SORT OF LONG-TERM EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANCE. THE WELFARE DEPARTMENT PROPOSED UNCLASSIFIED

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AN 18-YEAR EDUCATION GRANT PROGRAM WITH A FIRST-YEAR INCREMENT OF \$266,000 (20 BAHT TO THE DOLLAR) THAT WOULD PROVIDE 150 BAHT PER MONTH FOR PRESCHOOLERS, 100 BAHT PER MONTH FOR ELEMENTARY SCHOOL CHILDREN AND 125 BAHT FOR SECONDARY SCHOOL CHILDREN.

6. THE PLAN ALSO PROPOSED THAT THE WELFARE DEPARTMENT ASSIST IN DOCUMENTING ALL CHILDREN WITH BIRTH CERTIFICATES AND ASSUME CUSTODY OF ABANDONED CHILDREN. ALTHOUGH THE PROPOSAL WAS NEVER ENACTED, IT SHOWS SERIOUS CONCERN ON THE PART OF THAI OFFICIALS FOR THE ECONOMIC HARDSHIP FACED BY AMERASIAN CHILDREN. CONSEQUENTLY, WE RECOMMEND THAT THE UNNECESSARY CRITICISM OF THAI AUTHORITIES AND PEOPLE BE ELIMINATED FROM THE LETTER TO THE SFRC.

7. OUR THAI AND U.S. INTERLOCUTORS IN THE WELFARE FIELD GENERALLY AGREED THAT THERE WAS NO MORE SOCIAL STIGMA ATTACHED TO THE AMERASIAN CHILDREN THAN THERE IS FOR ANY OTHER ECONOMICALLY DISADVANTAGED ILLEGITIMATE CHILD IN THAILAND. IT WAS AGREED THAT FOR THE 80 PERCENT OF THE CHILDREN WHO ARE CAUCASOID THERE HAS BEEN NO SOCIAL

DISCRIMINATION AND FOR THE REMAINING 20 PERCENT, SOCIAL DISCRIMINATION, THOUGH PRESENT, HAS BEEN MINIMAL. PREVIOUSLY, THERE EXISTED LEGAL DISCRIMINATION INHERENT IN REVOLUTIONARY PARTY ANNOUNCEMENT 337 OF 1972 ISSUED TO PREVENT VIETNAMESE REFUGEES FROM OBTAINING THAI CITIZENSHIP. AS WE HAVE REPORTED, THE THAI JURIDICAL COUNCIL HAS ALREADY REVERSED THAT DECISION AND THE RTG ON A CASE-BY-CASE BASIS IS DOCUMENTING THE CHILDREN.

8. A KEY OF THE WELFARE DEPARTMENT'S PLAN IS TO PROVIDE ALL CHILDREN WITHOUT BIRTH CERTIFICATES OR HOUSE REGISTRATION WHICH ARE PARTICULARLY NECESSARY FOR SCHOOL REGISTRATION. THE PEARL S. BUCK FOUNDATION (PSB), AS THE ONLY AGENCY HERE MANDATED TO ASSIST AMERASIAN UNCLASSIFIED

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CHILDREN, HAS PROPOSED A THREE-YEAR \$150,00 PROJECT TO USAID TO IDENTIFY AND REGISTER ALL AMERASIAN CHILDREN IN THAILAND. THIS PROJECT IS FAVORED BY THE RTG WELFARE DEPARTMENT.

9. PSB IS CURRENTLY ASSISTING 1,325 AMERASIAN CHILDREN IN THAILAND OR ROUGHLY ONE OF THREE GIVEN LIMITATIONS OF SPONSORSHIP. EMPHASIS OF THE PSB PROGRAM IS ON MONTHLY CASH GRANTS, COUNSELLING AND REFERRAL. SPONSORED CHILDREN RECEIVE A MONTHLY STIPEND OF 180 BAHT WHICH IS DEPOSITED IN A SAVINGS ACCOUNT FOR THE CHILD. THE CHILD OR GUARDIAN CAN DRAW A PORTION OF THIS MONEY EACH MONTH. THAI CASEWORKERS VISIT EACH FAMILY MONTHLY AND EMPHASIZE USE OF LOCALLY AVAILABLE SERVICES SUCH AS FREE DENTAL CARE.

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INFO AMEMBASSY MANILA
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10. IT IS THE VIEW OF THE PSB REPRESENTATIVE THAT THE AMERASIAN CHILDREN REQUIRE ASSISTANCE OF A KIND THAT ONLY GOVERNMENTS CAN RENDER. PSB WOULD BE IN FAVOR OF USG ASSISTANCE SUCH AS THAT ENVISAGED IN S.2555, FOR SCHOOL TUITION, HEALTH CARE, SPECIAL MEDICAL/SURGICAL NEEDS, NUTRITION PROGRAMS, OCCUPATIONAL TRAINING AND SOCIAL REHABILITATION OF THE CHILDREN'S MOTHERS, VOCATIONAL COUNSELLING, DAY-CARE CENTERS, AND JOB PLACEMENT SERVICES FOR AMERASIAN CHILDREN. PSB FOR ITS PART FEELS THAT DAY-CARE CENTERS WOULD BE PARTICULARLY HELPFUL AS WOULD ASSISTANCE FOR MEDICAL TREATMENT FOR THOSE AFFLICTED WITH LEPROSY, MENTAL RETARDATION OR SPEECH DEFECTS.

11. IT IS THE VIEW OF THE WELFARE DEPARTMENT AND PSB THAT BECAUSE THERE ARE VERY FEW TOTALLY ABANDONED CHILDREN IN THAILAND, THERE IS NO NEED FOR THE SUPPORT OR ESTABLISHMENT OF ORPHANAGES OR ADOPTION SERVICES. THE WELFARE DEPARTMENT AND PSB ARE AGAINST TREATMENT OF AMERASIAN CHILDREN IN ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS THAT WOULD DETRACT FROM MAINSTREAMING OR INTEGRATION INTO THAI SOCIETY. THE WELFARE DEPARTMENT, PRINCIPALLY BECAUSE OF THE INCREASING AGE OF THE CHILDREN ADVISES AGAINST FOREIGN ADOPTIONS EXCEPT BIOLOGICAL U.S. CITIZEN FATHERS. NOTHING NOW PREVENTS THE ADOPTION BY BIOLOGICAL U.S. CITIZEN FATHERS BUT VERY FEW HAVE DEMONSTRATED
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CONCERN OR INTEREST SINCE THE DEPARTURE OF U.S. FORCES IN MID-1976.

12. IN LINE WITH FOREGOING, WE MAKE THE FOLLOWING RECOMMENDATIONS:

(A) CONCERNING THE SPECIFIC LANGUAGE OF THE BILL, WE RECOMMEND, IN ORDER TO FOCUS THE ASSISTANCE UPON THE AMERICAN CHILDREN AND THEIR MAINTENANCE AND ASSISTANCE, THE EXCISION OF THE PHRASE IN PARA 2(2) SECTION A, "WHO ARE ORPHANED OR ABANDONED, OR WHOSE PARENT OR SOLE SURVIVING PARENT, AS THE CASE MAY BE, HAS IRREVOCABLY RELINQUISHED ALL PARENTAL RIGHTS." WE SUGGEST THIS BECAUSE NOT ONLY MIGHT IT DETRACT FROM THOSE WHOM IT IS SUPPOSED TO BENEFIT BUT BECAUSE IT WOULD OPEN UP OPPORTUNITIES FOR ADOPTION AGENTS AND BROKERS TO EXPLOIT THE OVERALL ADOPTION FIELD. WE REFER TO BANGKOK 3252 WHICH DETAILED RECENT RTG POLICY DIRECTIONS IN THE FACE OF RECENT BABY SELLING AND ADOPTION RACKETS.

(B) EMBASSY ALSO BELIEVES THAT SUMS PROPOSED IN THE BILL ARE

APPROPRIATE GIVEN THE RTG'S 1976 SURVEY AND INFLATIONARY FACTORS.

(C) EMBASSY CONCURS IN USING NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS
AS THE CHANNEL FOR DISTRIBUTING FUNDS. SINCE PEARL S. BUCK FOUN-
DATION HAS THE MANDATE AND HAS DONE THE GROUND WORK, WE
BELIEVE RTG WOULD BE PLEASED TO HAVE PSB ACT AS THE AGENT.
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